

HOW HAS THE NIEHS WORKER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM ADAPTED TO ADDRESS DIVERSITY, OUTREACH AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

Speaker

Characteristics & Relative Risk of Occupational Fatalities of Hispanic Construction Workers

Jim Platner, Ph.D.

Center to Protect Workers' Rights

Summary of Presentation

Jim Platner discussed the occupational fatalities and non-fatal injuries among Hispanic construction workers. Through some statistical data, he described the characteristics of Hispanic Construction Workers. Because the majority of Hispanic workers are recent immigrants to the United States, trainers should take that barrier into account. In addition, he explained that the Hispanic construction workforce is considerably younger (average of 5 years) than non-Hispanic workers, and that they could become the emerging majority in the construction workforce due to continuing immigration. Another barrier to training is the fact that Hispanics have less education, and that literacy can be a bigger challenge than the language barrier. The majority of Hispanic workers are paid lower wages and don't have health insurance, which directly affects reported job injuries. They are less likely to miss work and report non-fatal injuries, but continue to have higher death rates. They are more likely to work in higher risk construction occupations, and within the high risk occupations, like helpers, roofers and laborers, they are more likely to die on the job. The difference in cause of death is mostly head injuries resulting from falls from heights. From this data, he identified the following issues as barriers for worker training programs. 1) Literacy is an issue in both English and Spanish. 2) Transportation /access to safe or preferred work assignments and getting to a job is a challenge even if they are well trained. 3) Language and communications barriers lead to not understanding safety directions. 4) The Cultural and Social Support Networks that workers develop do not exist for Hispanic workers because they are so new to the country and this makes finding and retaining employment more difficult, increases the likelihood of exploitation, and puts more pressure on them to work even if they are injured.

Speaker:

Designing Training to Build Cultural Competency

Michael Lythcott

The Lythcott Company

Summary of Presentation

Through his session Michael Lythcott provided context for the term "cultural competence" and how understanding these cultural issues can provide valuable insight into successful outreach, barriers to outreach, life skills training, and language issues. Lythcott explained that as managers and trainers we must become the tool of cultural competency.

In defining culture, Lythcott explained that culture tells you the unwritten rules, gives you a sense of belonging, helps you win the approval of others and is mostly invisible to members within the culture. Culture is a layered phenomenon and in order to break through it is important to find the common layer.

Through his discussion he argued that stereotypes are a natural human condition because it is not possible to live in a multi-cultural environment without developing stereotypes. However, there is a comfort-competence link because if we are not comfortable with individual we are less likely to see their competence and reward them. Therefore, if you are in a position of authority you will more likely look at an individual's development, skills and competence and if there is cultural dissidence you will focus more on attitudes and behaviors. In order to build cultural competency through training it should focus on work-related career skills and not on making someone a "better" human being. In addition, it is important to create a safe and value-neutral environment where everyone feels that they have the right to participate, and to use interactive and active training modules. It is important to use an experiential learning cycle, which starts with a concrete experience, next a guided reflection, and then generalized learning. In order to plan for a successful training bring in an outside expert if you do not have adequate internal resources, train and certify your trainers, don't confuse awareness building and skill building, give trainees the communication tools to develop their cultural competencies, and finally use personal stories to reduce your distance with the audience.

Discussion

A question was raised about who benefits from bias. The presenters explained that by turning out trainees who are more culturally competent they would transform other areas. There is a bigger social implication and larger ripple effects in society.

During the discussion a question was raised whether racial disparities are rooted in race or in economic status and whether this is more of a class issue? The presenters explained that when looking at the Hispanic numbers if you correct for education and income you will find less fatality rates, but this is not the case for African Americans.